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2 Let's move on.

3 I apologize for taking a long time on
4 these witnesses. We are trying to make a
5 proper record and get the factual bases.

6 Susan D'Alessandro, former chairperson
7 for Local 30, a women's group.

8 MS. D'ALESSANDRO: Good morning
9 everyone. I'm Susan D'Alessandro and I am a
10 white female. I'm a member of the
11 International Union of Operating Engineers,
12 Local 30, and one of the founders of that
13 Local's Womens Committee, a graduate of the
14 Local 30's Apprenticeship Program as well as a
15 former assistant shop steward. I also stand
16 as the first woman to be licensed as a
17 stationery engineer by the City of New York
18 and hold license to operate refrigeration
19 equipment of unlimited capacity within the
20 city's limits.

21 I am a member of the National
22 Association of Power Engineers and I am
23 presently employed by the New York City Board
24 of Education, supervising plant operations for
25 the division of school facilities in Community

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2 District 3. I hope this will qualify my
3 testimony.

4 I should identify that stationery
5 engineering is an area of nontraditional
6 employment for women. It involves the
7 maintenance of buildings and not the
8 construction of buildings or infrastructure.
9 Beyond that, I would like to clarify that my
10 experience as an apprentice, tradeswoman,
11 organizer in the woman's labor front and
12 advocate for other women in nontraditional
13 employment has exposed, in my opinion, a
14 considerable level of discrimination toward
15 minorities.

16 I have been in nontraditional
17 employment since 1972 and in the field of
18 engineering since 1982. I have done well in
19 engineering and attribute much of of my
20 success to many of my co-workers. Those
21 superiors, peers and subordinates alike who
22 have supported my efforts have all been men.

23 That is the crux of the issue for
24 nontraditional employment for women, for men
25 hold the key to the skill and practice of the

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2 trades which are not among the things that are
3 learned in books or lectured. Hands on
4 experience has been passed on for eons and
5 remains to be the only true teacher in the
6 trades.

7 Women entering the trades are therefore
8 wholly dependent on those men who currently
9 hold the torch of knowledge. I will tell you
10 that many bright, earnest and honest men have
11 helped to shape my success. But I must also
12 tell you that I've seen that the few insidious
13 and bigoted who remain among us continue to
14 thwart the efforts and success of many women
15 in nontraditional employment.

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17 (Continued on next page.)
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2 Almost all women in nontraditional
3 employment work as lone representatives of
4 their gender on a given job site, in a gang or
5 in a crew. We are, by that circumstance,
6 ostracized before the fact.

7 There is no immediate remedy to the low
8 numbers and sparse distribution of women in
9 non-tradition employment. Reasonable analysis
10 of the situation has resulted in significant
11 legislation. I am here to tell you that that
12 legislation rarely delivers the support which
13 was intended. Of this we are certain.

14 We continue to lose significant numbers
15 among us because women are becoming distressed
16 and burned out before they achieve the skills
17 necessary to assure stability and market them.
18 Of equal or greater concern is the loss of
19 those women who have been perhaps stronger and
20 more determined, who have attained significant
21 levels of skill and after becoming saturated
22 by years of bigotry and discrimination, resign
23 their positions and turn on other areas of
24 endeavor to escape the stress of
25 nontraditional employment for women.

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2 Those women who survive these points,
3 beyond these points, generally pay a price
4 never reflected in the dollars they become
5 capable of earning, as the psychological
6 stress and harm that women in the trades
7 suffer parallel, in my opinion, that of women
8 battered, abused and raped in that the guilty
9 are rarely punished as severely as their
10 victims, or worse, they are never punished at
11 all.

12 From the start, at the apprentice
13 level, experience has demonstrated that the
14 situation we face is difficult. We have seen
15 apprenticeship programs run in such a fashion
16 as to ignore those rights of civil and due
17 process which we Americans hold so dear.

18 The first story I will tell you
19 involves a woman of color. One who was,
20 during her apprenticeship, unfairly expelled
21 from the apprenticeship program. She began to
22 experience her harassment on the job site
23 where she was assigned to a graveyard shift
24 with only her shift supervisor, a male
25 engineer.

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2 He was verbally abusive toward her,
3 continually criticizing her performance in the
4 most menial of tasks, such as sweeping and
5 mopping, sometimes demanding she perform those
6 tasks redundantly.

7 I on one such occasion she was engaged by
8 him in heated conversation when he exhibited
9 foul language and demeaning remarks in
10 reference to the color of her skin. After
11 indicating to her that her task performance
12 did not meet with his approval he punished her
13 time card and demanded she leave the premises.

14 She distinguished his behavior as
15 discriminatory and reported the incident to
16 both management and to the union. No action
17 was taken to keep such discriminatory behavior
18 in check and the situation continued daily for
19 her at work despite repeated complaints to
20 management and to the union.

21 The stress she was enduring began to
22 demonstrate itself in her attendance at work
23 as she began to dread her working life and
24 also in both her attendance and performance at
25 the apprenticeship school.

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2 The situation was driven to a head one
3 night while at work. On this particular night
4 she was the subject to the engineer's usual
5 verbal abuse. In addition, during a
6 conversation which became abusive, she began
7 to defend herself verbally, describing the
8 interaction as one in which she did not allow
9 this engineer to get the better of her.

10 She further reported that in his
11 frustration the engineer exposed himself
12 sexually to her. She formally reported this
13 incident to management and to the Women's
14 Committee. I assisted her in reporting the
15 incident to her union representative.
16 Immediately following her formal complaint,
17 she was suspended without pay until such time
18 as the incident was arbitrated. By virtue of
19 the arbitration, she was reinstated to her
20 position and the offending engineer was
21 assigned work elsewhere.

22 When she returned to work she was
23 confronted by retaliatory behavior on the part
24 of her employer. She began to exhibit extreme
25 stress symptoms in the form of anxiety attacks

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2 and did in fact collapse from one such attack
3 on her way to work and was hospitalized.

4 Upon her return to work she presented
5 paperwork from the hospital to document her
6 illness and was turned away by the employer,
7 who insisted on more specific documentation.
8 Realizing at this point that her situation was
9 not likely to change and that her health was
10 being threatened, she resigned.

11 She reported to her union business
12 agent the difficulty she had encountered at
13 work upon her release from the hospital and,
14 likewise, her resigned status. She requested
15 assistance in finding new employment at that
16 time and regularly phoned the union hall
17 seeking employment for several months without
18 success.

19 Although the union was not able to find
20 her a new assignment they did see their way to
21 notifying her that she was expected go to
22 appear at a hearing in front of the
23 apprenticeship committee for the purpose of
24 determining the advisability of continuing her
25 education.

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2 She approached the Director of
3 apprenticeship to explain the reason for her
4 poor performance at school the prior semester,
5 to which he responded he was not interested.

6 She felt at this point unable to
7 present her case before the Apprentice
8 Committee at the hearing and requested an
9 advocate from the Women's Committee. I agreed
10 to present the circumstances surrounding her
11 performance during the semester in question
12 and notified the Chairman of Apprenticeship in
13 writing as to the intention of the aggrieved
14 student to have me present her case.

15 Included in my request was the
16 apprentices signed statement indicating the
17 designated choice for advocacy. The Chairman
18 reported to me that he was receipt of both
19 requests and he would present them to the
20 committee during the proceeding.

21 I was present that evening at the union
22 hall and was prepared to make a statement on
23 behalf of the student. I was approached after
24 the hearing had been adjourned and was
25 informed that the committee had elected to

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2 take a vote on the issue at hand without any
3 supporting testimony. I was also informed
4 that the student had been expelled from the
5 apprenticeship program.

6 The following morning I contacted the
7 union business agent and informed him that
8 unless the decision of expulsion was recinded
9 that I would press formal changes against the
10 apprenticeship program with the State
11 Department of Education.

12 The student was, in fact, reinstated.
13 I remain, however, incensed that this
14 reinstatement was effected not because it was
15 right or just, nor because circumstances
16 surrounding this woman's failing grades and
17 attendance -- nor because there was special
18 circumstances surrounding this woman's failing
19 and attendance, but because the policies in
20 place at the union would clearly have been
21 identified as unacceptable by any authority.

22 I therefore submit to you that this
23 committee as well as other union officials
24 that were involved knew that their policies
25 compromised the rights of this woman and that

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2 they knowingly denied those rights. I should
3 add that following the threat of formal
4 complaint this woman was immediately
5 successfully referred for employment.

6 I will now describe the circumstances
7 of another woman apprentice who is no longer
8 affiliated with our union because of her
9 experiences at our local which so distressed
10 her life that she felt compelled to seek
11 employment elsewhere.

12 She first indicated trouble with regard
13 to discriminatory behavior at her job site
14 when rumors started circulating at work. The
15 substance of these rumors indicated that she
16 was sexually involved with several members of
17 the staff, which was wholly untrue. The
18 rumors were reported to be both explicit and
19 degrading. Most of the talk funneled down to
20 her as hearsay and was denied by all the
21 parties when confronted.

22 As she continued to hold her own -- she
23 continued to hold her own one night until she
24 was attacked in a darkened area of the plant
25 by a fellow co-worker. He grabbed her while

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2 clothed only in his underwear and knocked her
3 down and got on top of her. She fought him
4 off.

5 Although she never described the
6 incident as an attempted rape, she was clearly
7 upset to have been physically overpowered
8 against her will by a man with whom she wished
9 to have no physical contact.

10 After she made formal complaint to a
11 shop steward, the harassment escalated
12 further. There were cards addressed to her
13 containing obscene material posted for view on
14 the bulletin board, and her daily tasks at
15 work began to become defined in such a manner
16 as to make them physically impossible for her
17 to perform.

18 As an example of this, the foreman
19 instructed her to move a heavy plumbing
20 fixture a considerable distance. When she
21 attempted to make use of a dolly, he counseled
22 her that her performance for promotion would
23 indicate that she was not able to complete her
24 assigned tasks unless she was able to move the
25 fixture without any aid.

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2 COMMISSIONER ROUSSO: I'm terribly
3 sorry. We're going to have to stop you. Do
4 you have this all in writing?
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7 (Continued on next page.)
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2 MS. D'ALESSANDRO: I do and the NOW
3 attorneys are submitting it to your panel.

4 COMMISSIONER ROUSSO: Okay. Thank you.
5 I'm sorry.

6 (Applause.)